

# OCFO BULLETIN



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From the Desk of  
**EDMUNDO A. GONZALES**  
Chief Financial Officer

I am pleased to announce and share with you changes in Temporary Duty travel policy that are designed to streamline travel processing. These changes are the culmination of an effort that began in 1994 when, under the auspices of the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP), representatives from across Government came together to improve federal travel management. In addition, many of the improvements in processing grew out of a joint OASAM/OCFO Streamlining Task Group. Several concepts initially endorsed by the Task Group have been codified by GSA as revisions to the Federal Travel Regulations.

The spirit of these changes was captured well in the JFMIP report on "Improving Travel Management Governmentwide":

"Travel is not an end in itself. It is a support function that enables the traveler to fulfill mission-directed goals. We must not make support functions difficult, for it will add unnecessary complexity to the mission. The Team strongly urges implementing policies that are easy to understand and easy to administer. We recommend policies based on common sense."

I believe that the changes we are implementing are based on common sense, for not only do they streamline processing, they rely more on the business relationship between the Approving Official and the employee. The Approving Official, generally the immediate supervisor, is in the best position to know the itinerary of the traveler and review costs for reasonableness. Approving Officials will review and approve travel receipts and travel vouchers in general.

I want to thank everyone in the financial community who is participating in this process. This is only the first of the planned streamlining changes. With Travel Manager software becoming available to more users we can begin to plan for the day of paperless voucher processing. I foresee the day when travel voucher preparation, review, approval, audit, and payment can be done in just a few days. Working together we can better serve our customers; we have taken a step forward today.

Included in this Bulletin is a description of some of the more important changes that will affect travelers, managers, and the financial community.

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## EVENTS CALENDAR

### DOLARS

02/25/97 February WCF Cycle.

### REGIONAL TELECONFERENCE SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>
03/05/97	Wednesday	2:00 p.m.

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## OPERATIONS, DEVELOPMENTS, AND EVENTS

1. New Temporary Duty Travel Policy. A revised DLMS 7 - Travel Management, is now in the clearance process. The revised manual includes the following significant changes:
  - \* Any DOL employee who is expected to travel eight or more times during a year should be authorized to travel under a "blanket" travel authorization. This includes National Office employees. Managers, on an exception basis, may place frequent travelers who travel less than eight times a year on a "blanket" travel advance.
  - \* The use of ATM for travel advances will be opened up to travelers who travel on a "blanket" authorization, if they do not already have a cash advance. Travelers who are expected to travel eight or more times a year may request "blanket" advances.
  - \* Employees authorized to travel under a "blanket" authorization will no longer be required to submit a specific trip authorization for travel to conferences, meetings, or training.
  - \* Emphasis is placed on use of the Contractor-issued credit card (American Express) for the purchase of transportation services.
  - \* To allow employees to make timely payment of their charge card bills, the time frame for review, approval, and payment of vouchers has been shortened to 10 days from when an employee submits an accurate voucher to his/her approving official. To assist managers and employees to reduce the processing time, the Department is making available Travel Manager, a software product that is embedded with travel rules, up-to-date per diem and POV rates, and computation functionality. Agencies are asked to limit the review within an agency to that of the approving official.
  - \* To further speed voucher payments, approving officials will review receipts and assure the correctness of the voucher. The threshold for maintaining receipts is raised from \$25.00 to \$75.00. All receipts for transportation, lodging, and expenditures of \$75.00 and over are required.

## OPERATIONS, DEVELOPMENTS, AND EVENTS

- \* Servicing Finance Offices may pay vouchers prepared using Travel Manager software within two days of voucher receipt. Vouchers prepared using Travel Manager may be audited after payment is made.
- \* Employees who travel frequently should be issued Sprint calling cards. The benefit to the government is that costs are lower, and the benefit to the employee/traveler is that calls to home, when authorized, may be longer. The cost using the Sprint card is 47 cents per call plus 6.5 cents per minute. A ten minute call from and to anywhere in the country costs \$1.12.
- \* At the discretion of the Approving Official, employees may be requested to obtain "advance authorization" for anticipated taxicabs fares of \$40.00 or more (raised from \$15.00).
- \* The revised DLMS will reflect the higher POV reimbursement rates authorized by GSA.
- \* Currently, if an employee cannot find lodging within the amount allowed for lodging per diem, she/he may request to use actual subsistence reimbursement provisions of the DLMS. However, the differential amount between the lodging cost and the per diem rate must be at least \$5.00. In the revised manual, approving officials may waive the \$5.00 differential requirement when a traveler is required to visit the same high cost location repeatedly during the year.
- \* References to Government Transportation Requests (GTR) have been substantially eliminated since DOL has received a waiver from GSA to use "annual" GTRs when each servicing finance office establishes a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with their respective Travel Management Centers. GSA-specified procedures have been added.
- \* Approval thresholds to hold a conference have been changed from a conference costing \$5,000.00 to a conference to which 30 or more people are expected to attend. Approval authority is delegated to the Agency Administrative Officer.
- \* Travelers will be paid 3/4 day per diem for M&IE expenses for the first and last day of travel when travel includes an overnight stay. Quarterly calculations and the application of the DOL 1/2 hour rule, required by the current system, are common voucher preparation errors. The 3/4 day per diem rule will significantly reduce voucher preparation errors and speed audit of vouchers. The change is essentially revenue neutral according to a study recently completed in DOL.
- \* No per diem will be paid for travel that is completed within 12 hours. The 3/4 day per diem will be paid for travel requiring more than 12 hours but less than 24 hours.
- \* The approval level of the agency official who can approve exceptions to standard provisions of the travel manual is lowered. The actions requiring Agency Head approval are now limited to first class transportation and certain subsistence expenses related to security

## OPERATIONS, DEVELOPMENTS, AND EVENTS

(Part 14). All other actions have been delegated to lower levels with Agency Administrative Officers playing key approval roles when exceptions to standard procedures are required.

- \* Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) will be used to make travel payments.
- \* The revised chapter will no longer contain appendices. When needed, they will be added to the OCFO home page.

There are numerous other organizational title changes, editorial and/or updates provided by GSA included in the revised manual, but the above are those of significance to management and the traveler.

2. Internal Control Report. The OIG issued a draft of its FY 1996 internal control report. It contains 75.5 total findings. Forty-six and a quarter were unresolved, 29.25 were resolved. There were 28 new findings for 1996. Agency responses are due to Norman Perkins, Room S4214, no later than February 18, 1997. If responses can be submitted earlier, please do so. Please also provide the responses on a disk or via e-mail.
3. FACTS. The Federal Agencies' Centralized Trial-Balance Systems' (FACTS) Adjusted Trial Balances (ATBs) and related notes are due to Treasury no later than March 3, 1997. The Department plans to transmit the data no later than February 28.

Like last year, the ATBs will be electronically generated directly from the DOLAR\$ trial balances; agencies' DOLAR\$ trial balances will be the FACTS trial balances. Agencies' prompt attention to any journal entries necessary to prepare the DOLAR\$ trial balances for the FACTS transmittal, including any audit adjustments, will be greatly appreciated.

Also like last year, copies of the FACTS ATBs and related notes will be sent to agencies, along with a key that translates the Treasury accounting codes to agency names.

4. February WCF Cycle. The February WCF cycle will be run on February 25, 1997. Agency redistribution will be allowed February 26 - 28, 1997. The OASAM servicing finance offices should ensure, as much as possible, that WCF expenditures for February have been recorded in DOLAR\$ by February 24, 1997.
5. CFO Advisory Council. The agenda for the January meeting included the year-end closing process and the FY 1996 audit. Both topics generated lively and productive discussion. The Council commissioned a year-end closing work group to evaluate the closing process for FY 1997. This work group will begin meeting in early March.

## DOLAR\$ AVAILABILITY SCHEDULE

### February 15 through March 21, 1997

Following are the dates and hours that DOLAR\$ will be available from February 15, 1997, through March 21, 1997. Any Agency Financial Manager or Regional Financial Officer who requires a change to this schedule should call Brenda Kyle on (202) 219-8314.

FEBRUARY 1997			MARCH 1997		
Sat.	Feb. 15	System Closed	Sat.	Mar. 01	System Closed
Sun.	Feb. 16	System Closed	Sun.	Mar. 02	System Closed
<b>Mon.</b>	<b>Feb. 17</b>	<b>System Closed</b>	Mon.	Mar. 03	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Tues.	Feb. 18	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Tues.	Mar. 04	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Wed.	Feb. 19	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Wed.	Mar. 05	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thurs.	Feb. 20	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Thurs.	Mar. 06	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Fri.	Feb. 21	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Fri.	Mar. 07	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Sat.	Feb. 22	System Closed	Sat.	Mar. 08	System Closed
Sun.	Feb. 23	System Closed	Sun.	Mar. 09	System Closed
Mon.	Feb. 24	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Mon.	Mar. 10	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Tues.	Feb. 25	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Tues.	Mar. 11	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Wed.	Feb. 26	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Wed.	Mar. 12	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thurs.	Feb. 27	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Thurs.	Mar. 13	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Fri.	Feb. 28	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Fri.	Mar. 14	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
			Sat.	Mar. 15	System Closed
			Sun.	Mar. 16	System Closed
			Mon.	Mar. 17	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
			Tues.	Mar. 18	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
			Wed.	Mar. 19	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
			Thurs.	Mar. 20	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
			Fri.	Mar. 21	8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.